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1861
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ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES

AND

CITIZENS OF PROVIDENCE,

ON THE EIGHTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

JULY 4, 1861.

BY SAMUEL L. CALDWELL, D. D.

PROVIDENCE:
KNOWLES, ANTHONY & CO., PRINTERS.
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E 220
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CITY OF PROVIDENCE.

BY THE CITY COUNCIL, July 8, 1861—

Resolved, That the Committee appointed to make arrangements for the Municipal Celebration of the anniversary of American Independence, be and they are hereby authorized to request of the Rev. Dr. Caldwell, a copy of the Oration delivered by him, on the fourth instant, and to cause the same to be published in pamphlet form, for the use of the City Council.

Attest,

SAMUEL W. BROWN,

CITY CLERK.

RECORDED
CITY CLERK
JUL 25 1861

ORATION.

It were a serious and unreasonable breach of public duty to suspend the usual observance of this day. I know not that grave perils, or solemn duties, that anything but conscious shame, should sober its usual and festal joy. The past, at least, is secure. The day has won its prescriptive and immortal right of separation from all days, at the top of our calendar, at the head of our history. The Revolution, of which the Declaration which has just been read was the written justification to the nations and to history, is a fact accomplished ; safe and sacred in the recollections of America, in the honor of the human race. It has passed the audit of time, and the judgment of civilized man ; its spirit, its methods, its heroes, its results, justify it to all ages ; while it would seem that its issues can be opened never again. Fragments falling from us might indeed go back to the old dependence ; for such seems the inevitable direction

of the schismatic States. Carolina planters, sick of democracy, over their rare Madeira, may sigh for

“The good old Colony times,
When we lived under a king,”

and propose to take one of England's rather redundant supply of royal heirs in exchange for a blockaded cotton crop. Divided sovereignty is likely to bring back Europe into America, and for no good result; unless to fight over again the old issue. But if that comes, it will not come first; and whatever comes, whatever the future may undo, whatever lies angry in this immediate present, there lies behind us, in its calm morning glory, the Revolution. This day comes, bringing that in its first and ancient grandeur, mighty with its unspent inspirations. Whatever is lost, this remains. Whatever is disputed, whatever has departed, the glory has not gone out of the day, any more than the day has gone out of the year. It gives us the benefit of its unsullied example. It tells what America *was*. It comes, still wearing on its head this great and holy memory, undiminished by disaster, unhonored only by the unworthy. Nothing which comes after can dis-crown or stain it. It has passed into the high and serene heaven of history, to be reached by mortal change no more.

It returns, indeed, as it never came; itself the same, to look into the face of a new and kindred hour. All at once it finds a time with pulses mated to its own, great with similar duties, pregnant with vaster issues.

It has been coming every year, and handsome words, and much powder, and the clanging bells have given it the honor which is in the air, and lasts its hour. For a day, we remembered that once liberty was put into the pinch of a real struggle, and found men who did not fail her. And it seemed as if they had done the work for all generations, and nothing was left for us but a holiday. But at last the tide resurges, and fills the day with new meaning. We are finding that no generation is allowed to anticipate its successor, to take all questions into its single decision. Their duty was done, and they are dust. But ours stands waiting. Liberty, and not that only, but all that goes with it, nursed by it, or making for it a larger, and a better home ; the national life of America, is put upon us to carry, for our short hour, to meet its exigencies, such as God, in his order, brings. They, four score and five years ago, turned one of the sharp corners of history, and now, the stress and sharpness of another difficult passage comes to us. We stand before the future, as they did, in the jaws of a great crisis in the civilization of America, at the turning point and head of a new era ; unless we are faithful as they, at the end of what they begun.

For the Revolution was the beginning and usher of a new era. It was preparatory to a work great as itself. It was but one of the steps, forward and decisive indeed, in the construction of a new society, in the begetting and life of a nation.

It came as a political, a providential necessity, pre-

pared through all the antecedent history, precipitating tendencies and attractions, long held in solution. It was predestined in a thousand causes, and chiefly in the spirit of the people from the start. Says De Tocqueville, "Methinks I see the destiny of America embodied in the first puritan who landed on these shores, just as the human race was represented by the first man." The free spirit was always here. It blew the Mayflower westward, stronger than any Atlantic wind. It set its front of resistance always against aggression, firm as the shores against the Atlantic wave. Independence did not begin with the declaration of it. George the Third only provoked into overt resistance, the temper which came here with Winthrop and Williams; which was always jealous; which for a century and a half had grown to be a habit of the people; which Burke boldly told Parliament was "unalterable by any human art." The Revolution was latent always in their breasts, and when events were ripe for it, it came. It came almost without intention. They did not mean independence, in the beginning. They meant remonstrance. "They builded better than they knew." It is Providence which is wiser than man, looking over his head, and bringing out of his meaning its own; out of our conflict of to-day, ends disavowed, and it may be, unexpected.

So far as the origin of the Revolution dates in any visible event, we are now closing the century since it was born. In 1761, just one hundred years ago, John

Adams heard James Otis argue against the writs of assistance in the old Town House in Boston ; and dated from that hour, the beginning of the Revolution. "American Independence was then and there born." In the same year, 1761, Richard Henry Lee, the mover of Independence fifteen years later, was making his first recorded speech in the Legislature of Virginia, full of generous ardor for human freedom, against that great crime of Great Britain, charged so solemnly against her in Jefferson's original draught of the Declaration, of forcing the trade in slaves upon the colonies. The Legislature of Virginia in 1861, does not well honor the anniversary of her first opening of the Revolution. It will not answer for Great Britain, after a century of human progress, to allow the interests of trade to lead her into her old mistake, and provoke a new grudge.

But, as the Revolution did not begin with itself, it did not end with itself. It came out of Providential necessities ; so new necessities came out of it, and after it. It severed a false and injurious connection, which allowed no national character and life ; while it brought into being the possibility and the necessity of that. This was the great problem which issued out of the struggles of Revolution. Independence pointed further than itself. It was not enough. It left a people free, but unequal to their destiny. It contained the necessity and prophecy of a government, of "a more perfect union," of a nation. The free spirit was here ;

the elements of a great and free State ; the possibilities of a national life, grand as the continent which, through the ages, God had reserved for it ; into which should enter the choice blood, and the richest forces of modern civilization ; which should cast itself into such institutions as best reflect human intelligence, as best promote human benefit. And the problem was one of organization, to organize liberty into government, a people into a nation, and all nebulous and chaotic elements into planetary order and movement. By revolution the noxious element of foreign authority had been expelled. But the creative, constructive work remained ; if, indeed, it is not still on hand. A great Providential experiment was opened, with terms so grand, with an aim so above all precedent, involving in its process such difficulties, in its success such benefit, in its failure such disaster, that it summons to itself our noblest virtues, and the anxieties of the whole world. It is our Providential calling and destiny to be a *nation*, with undivided sovereignty, a common soil, and common laws, vital in every part with the same instincts and aspirations. This was the question facing our fathers instantly in the very act for which we are doing them honor,—whether they would accept their destiny, and come into such terms as should fix it in one organic, indissoluble commonwealth. They had hardly an election. Common dangers, common as well as conflicting interests, political necessities, necessities in history, geography, language, blood, as well as events,

forced them together, into unity of government, as a condition of other and more spiritual unity. The effort of that age of our history, to throw off the disease which came of British rule, was not more admirable, perhaps was really less essential to our progress, than the effort which followed, to grasp all existing possibilities of union, and knit them into an organized State. The crisis of revolution was followed by the crisis of crystallization. The loose bonds were tightened. Attractions were combined, repulsions reduced, remote and opposite interests balanced and adjusted; and a single articulated sovereignty came forth, to which the hopes, the aspirations, the powers and the destiny of a free people were committed. Into a new constitution of government, most nicely balancing local and general powers, was put the rich freight of American nationality and American civilization.

The experiment has been magnificent, and it has been difficult. It has been an attempt to manage, on a vast scale, the most complicated, and often contending forces. It covers a vast and spreading space,—the width, it may be, prospectively the length of a continent; liable, therefore, to fly apart, from its very greatness, like the revolving stone of the cutler. Reduced, as distance and separation are, by the improved methods of modern locomotion—so that in some respects the country is smaller, with all its growth, than when its people were this side of the Alleghanies,—still its very geography necessitates social and industrial and personal

differences. The vast geographic distances are offset indeed, as also are social and political oppositions, by controlling laws of geography, which forbid the section of the country simply by a surveyor's line. One language, also, is paramount and almost universal, and no lines of religion are interposed to make enemies of States and sections. The influences and tendencies of a common civilization,—often more potent than any compact of law,—commerce, religion, literature, education, travel, all intercourses by road or mail, serve to wear away the edges of collision, while they assimilate and unify the remote and strange populations.

But, in the beginning, the thirteen States had been for generations autonomies, each with its local interests and passions; almost nationalities by themselves; as much so as the States of Germany or of Italy; and it is not easy to blend and merge such centres of local attachment and sovereignty into one; as Charles the Fifth found it about as hard to make all his clocks strike at once, as to govern all the contending elements of his empire. The spirit of nationality, the loyalty to national authority, the influence of national institutions and laws, the cohesive power at the centre are liable to be reduced, and in some junctures over-borne, by local pride, and the jealous individualism of separate States. The divisive, centrifugal forces are always waiting their time, till at last they seem to have found it. It is only in theory, and in contemplation of law that we are one. In fact, a crude and heterogeneous mass is here

trying to blend and coalesce ; alien and native populations, habits of thinking and life, narrow contempts and sour prejudices, material and political interests, diverse and dividing, and the spirit of democratic freedom in all, to be organized into a consentaneous and powerful nation. Says DeTocqueville, "The dangers which threaten the American Union do not originate in the diversity of interests, or of opinions ; but in the various characters and passions of the Americans."

More closely implicated than anything else in the experiment of nationality here, is the presence of a servile race, and the type of civilization it has produced. For while other difficulties have given way under the general influences of our civilization, while many repugnancies and many omens of danger, which existed in the beginning, have passed out of sight, this has emerged to complicate our difficulties, and endanger our experiment, as nothing else. By inevitable social laws, I might say, by the eternal laws which God has planted in the human soul, such an institution could not be at peace in the mixed conditions under which our national life goes on. It is anomalous, to say the least, in a democratic state ; in the judgment of christendom it is immoral and pernicious ; the instincts of human nature, and the tendencies of our civilization are against it. Right or wrong, for better or worse, it has entered the structure of society in half the States, and of course, created there a style of life, manners, civilization peculiar to itself. And so, under the act of Un-

ion, in the bonds of a common national covenant and life, are married, for better or worse, two radically distinct civilizations. The one is of the past, and draws backward, and keeps society behind; the other goes with time, is of the nineteenth century rather than the twelfth, and by a law strong as the winds, and inevitable as gravity, must possess and rule the future. In the inevitable friction of two forms of society thus lying side by side, and by necessities of the case oppugnant, it has happened that both the pliancy and stiffness of our institutions have been tried. At any rate, thus has been precipitated the dread issue, in which it is to be tried whether we are two nations or one; whether the secret and unwritten laws of our national life, are inconsistent with the Constitution; whether for this one and only reason under heaven, we shall dissolve; whether this shall outweigh all reasons, necessities, aspirations for unity and nationality; whether the old struggle between central and local, between State and Nation, complicating itself with an institution antedating Independence, imperious in its nature and habit, and loyal only to its own law, and not to the Commonwealth, shall now at last break through the walls of constitutional order which are the security of us all, and bring down our national authority into the dust. This is the exigency; this we have on hand; this is the duty high, clear, inevitable as that of Seventy-six, to reintegrate the Union, into which our fathers fought their way through the Revolution. And it would seem as if we

were to do it on the same terms—may it be in the same courageous and persistent spirit! Not by our election, we are compelled to try force, and by that to vindicate, if we cannot restore, national order and authority. If we succeed, it will be worth what it costs. If we fail, we shall save our honor, and be ready to begin again. The problem, which, through all our history, we have been trying to work out in peace, must now be settled by the ordeal of battle. So rebellion wills. So Providence orders,—for it allows no option but a base and a fatal one. So be it!

“Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife!
To all the sensual world proclaim—
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.”

War is an evil, and a terrible one. But it may be the least of evils. It is to be accepted by us as a terrible necessity, only better than disintegration and national death. It is to stop when peace will do better; as soon as national authority will stand upright in its throne, without a *cordon* of bayonets. But it ought not to stop till one thing is settled, as perhaps only the heaviest artillery can settle it, viz: Whether this is a government, or only a temporary agreement, to be receded from at will; whether what was bought on so many fields of trouble, shall be sold without our consent, at Montgomery or Richmond; whether the American people is only an encampment of squatters, changing allegiance according to inclination, or whether it is

a nation, with an organic life, with a history, and a responsibility, and a destiny, a vital creature, "with large discourse of reason, looking before and after." The questions in issue go to the foundations of society, of law, order, of morals and of human well-being. It is whether our liberty is a regulated, constitutional liberty, regarding oaths and compacts, or the lawless liberty of Bedouins and Saint Antoine. It is whether the State is an extemporary contract, its government resting on chance consent, and liable to be dissolved at the pleasure of any party in it, or whether its powers are ordained of God, loyalty to it a moral obligation, and revolution the last desperate remedy against a government intolerably bad. A State, and in this I mean the Union, as the true and supreme State, is a perpetual, organic creature, from which, by its very nature and vital law, there can be no secession at will. Says Mr. Burke, in his *Reflections on the French Revolution* :

"The State ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico and tobacco, or some other such low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and to be dissolved by the fancy of the parties. It is to be looked on with other reverence ; because it is not a partnership in things subservient to the gross animal existence, of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science ; a partnership in all art ; a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained

but in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living and those who are dead, and those who are to be born. Each contract of each State is but a clause in the great primeval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible with the invisible world."

This, fellow citizens, we shall settle for all time to come, for whatever country is left to be governed by our Constitution,—that secession means violence, revolution, and is not to be undertaken but at the hazard of civil war, and being slain with "a sword bathed in heaven." This we shall settle, and must,—that the sovereignty of the United States is undivided and indivisible; that there is no double allegiance; that there can be no provincial loyalty to Virginia or Rhode Island, which releases from loyalty to the country, and to the whole country. This, we shall settle,—that the election of the people according to the Constitution, cannot be trifled with, whoever is offended by it. We fight for the sacredness of the ballot box, and well we may. It is the depository of the nation's will, the necessary instrument of peaceful liberty. Say the worst you can of its decisions, despise as you may the creatures that often come out of it,—like Noah's ark, clean and unclean things may go into it, two and two,—still it is the ark which carries our fortunes, and keeps our liberties through the deluge. Go forth, then, ye sacred legions, who war upon this insurrection against the ballot box and against

the flag. The flag is the symbol of national unity and national sovereignty. It belongs to no state, and to no administration. The people see in it the life, the honor, the power of a Nation, which cannot be broken into fragments, "which cannot, but by annihilating, die." The blood of all their millions leaps in its red veins; their hopes are in its heaven of stars. The consciousness of nationality, of a Providential calling and destiny, something deeper than geography, or trade, or constitutional agreement, a soul of Americanism, lies at the bottom of this struggle, and has armed our disputed borders with forests of steel. It is that mysterious sentiment of nationality, running in the blood, nourished by all that makes the country worth loving, nourished by the memories of to-day, by the liberty, the good government, the prosperity of every day, which breaks into this struggle, and is to restore our unity.

" While the manners, while the arts
That mould a nation's soul,
Still cling around our hearts,
So long from either beach,
The voice of blood shall reach,
More audible than speech,
' We are one.' "

Fellow citizens! it is good for us to be here, to go up into the Mount of Remembrance, to take counsel of the past and the future, of memories which cannot die, of hopes which cannot be disappointed, of the stern duties, as well as the patriotic joys of the hour. The day is left us, and it comes to us with all its great bur-

den of meaning and inspiration. Forsworn by the men who have madly violated its rich heritage, or stolen by them

“To face the garment of rebellion
With some fine color that may please the eye,”

it remains here unstained, and it remains for us to keep it with more than its ancient honor. The gallant fellows who stand for us, to-day, along the lines, keeping it after some sterner fashion than of a holiday, are to make a history not unworthy of that of the Revolution, to be remembered with a like grateful reverence by our children's children. Let us keep it in sympathy alike with the fathers and the sons, glad that the children of the men who burned the Gaspee, and bought victory with Perry on Lake Erie, who marched to Fort William Henry, and fought with Greene at Monmouth and Lafayette at Yorktown, are their heirs in spirit, in courage, in great service for America.

Let us still keep this day in the old spirit of hope. Despair does not become us, nor pusillanimity, but courage rather, and faith. We have a right to believe, under God still with us, in our destiny; in the destiny of free principles, of civilization, of an American nation, to hold the field, to have room enough, to live our time. If our territory be reduced, our soul shall be enlarged. The laws of population, the spirit of the age, the forces of spiritual religion, of a better civilization, the Providence which works through all will push their way, and it is barbarism, and despotism, and anarchy, which must

go to the wall. Let us take the word of Washington. "I do not believe," he says, "I do not believe that Providence has done so much for nothing. The Great Governor of the universe has led us too long and too far on the road to happiness and glory to forsake us in the midst of it." Let us have faith, not so much in events as in ideas; in that great idea, whose depository and incarnation God made this nation to be. Out of disintegration, even, by faith, we can reconstruct a better order. From all aberrations, like the beautiful stranger flaming so suddenly on the front of our Northern evening, the exorbitant stars will come back, and our history shall resume and run its course.

" Far, like the comet's way through infinite space,
Stretches the long untravelled path of light
Into the depths of ages: we may trace,
Afar, the brightening glory of its flight,
Till the receding rays are lost to human sight."

Men of Rhode Island! the most individual, independent of the colonies, born of the stiff, uncomplying spirit of Williams, the first to declare independence, and inaugurate Revolution, the last to come into the compact of national order and union, your local pride and the fire of your soul dilated by your narrow boundaries,—this is your glory, that you have learned to love your State *in* your country; that America is greater to you than Rhode Island; that you have no choice to make between them; that you have no honor parted from hers; that you are finding your honor in maintaining hers with the purse at home, and the flower of

your sons on the field. Alone, on this narrow spot, amidst jealous neighbors, in advance of all the world you have wrought out a great principle which illustrates your history. It has become the possession of the nation. It is to be the possession and joy of civilized man. Nothing remains for us then, but true to our traditions, and our principles, to give yourselves to the good and glory of our country, and of our whole country. If this State is not too small for our affections, America is not too large. Large, or small, let it be ours to make her pure, to make her free, to make her the everlasting home of Liberty resting on Law, of Law resting on Righteousness, of a nation great in all virtue, meekly fulfilling a beneficent destiny, under a Providence, never alienated and never forgotten.



ORDER OF EXERCISES.

1. MUSIC—BY SHEPARD'S CORNET BAND.
2. SINGING—BY A SELECT CHOIR—from the High School and Grammar Schools—under the direction of SETH SUMNER, Esq., Teacher of Vocal Music :

GOD BLESS OUR NATIVE LAND.

God bless our native land!
Firm may she ever stand,
Through storm and night :
When the wild tempests rave,
Ruler of winds and wave,
Do Thou our country save,
By Thy great might.

For her our prayer shall rise
To God, above the skies ;
On him we wait.
Thou who art ever nigh,
Guarding with watchful eye,
To thee aloud we cry,
God save the State.

3. PRAYER, BY THE REV. A. H. CLAPP, Pastor of the Beneficent Congregational Church.

4. READING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, BY N. W. DE MUNN, Principal of the Benefit Street Grammar School.
5. SINGING, BY THE SELECT CHOIR :

FIRMLY STAND, MY NATIVE LAND.

Firmly stand, firmly stand,
 My native land !
 Firmly stand, firmly stand,
 My native land !
 True in heart and true in hand,
 All that's lovely cherish.
 Thus shall God remain thy friend ;
 Then shall heaven thy walls defend,
 Freedom, freedom, freedom shall not perish !
 Firmly stand, firmly stand, my native land, my native land !

Safely dwell, safely dwell,
 My native land !
 Safely dwell, safely dwell,
 My native land !
 May thy sons united stand,
 Firm and true forever !
 God forbid the day should rise,
 When 'tis said our freedom dies :
 Freedom, freedom, freedom, die,—O never !
 Firmly stand, firmly stand, my native land, my native land !

Sing for joy, sing for joy,
 My native land !
 Sing for joy, sing for joy,
 My native land !
 In thee dwells a noble band,
 All thy weal to cherish !
 God with might will guard thee round,
 While thy steps in truth are found.
 Freedom, freedom, freedom, shall not perish !
 Firmly stand, firmly stand, my native land, my native land !

6. ORATION, BY REV. DR. SAMUEL L. CALDWELL, Pastor
of the First Baptist Church.

7. SINGING, BY THE SELECT CHOIR :

STAR SPANGLED BANNER !

Oh ! say can you see by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming ;
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly streaming.
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof, thro' the night, that our flag was still there ;
Oh, say does the star spangled banner yet wave,
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave !

On the shore dimly seen thro' the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes ;
What is that which the breeze o'er the towering sweep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses ?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines on the stream ;
'Tis the star-spangled banner, oh ! long may it wave,
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore,
That the havoc of war, and the battle's confusion,
A home and a country should leave us no more ?
Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hierling and slave,
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave :
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave,
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Oh ! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved home and the war's desolation :
Bless'd with victory and peace, may the heaven-rescued land
Praise the power that has made and preserved us a nation.
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto, "IN GOD IS OUR TRUST ;"
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave,
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.

8. BENEDICTION, BY THE REV. A. H. CLAPP.





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